



# Tennessee's Accelerating Literacy and Learning Corps

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In its commitment to academic recovery and student achievement, **Tennessee** used federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds to ramp up high-impact, personalized tutoring through a state matching grant called the Tennessee Accelerating Literacy & Learning ([TN ALL](#)) Corps. The grant program has received widespread participation from [87 school districts](#) — more than half of the districts in the state. The Tennessee Department of Education estimates the TN ALL Corps program will provide tutoring services to more than 200,000 students during the three years of the grant program.

The matching grant is available to school districts and community partners to offer tutoring in math and English language arts for students in grades one through five, and grantees may choose to offer tutoring in grades six through eight. [Research](#) has shown that high-quality tutoring programs can successfully accelerate student learning and is one of the most effective ways to increase achievement for students from low income households.

However, not all tutoring is [created equal](#), as the group size, dosage, and training and ongoing support for tutors are all important for developing high-impact tutoring. Drawing upon research from the [Annenberg Institute](#), the department of education set [standards](#) for grant recipients, including setting the maximum ratio of one tutor for every three students (grades one through five), requiring sessions to be 30-45 minutes and to occur multiple times per week, and ensuring content and tutors are consistent each semester.

The TN ALL Corps will use ESSER funds to provide financial matching grants for tutoring that started in the 2020-21 school year through the summer of 2024. For every student receiving tutoring, the state will provide \$700 in ESSER funds and require the district to contribute \$800. The local match can be made with the ESSER funds received by the school district. Participation in the TN ALL Corps program is also required for districts to participate in the state's [Best for All](#) recognition program, which provides financial support and resources to districts that spend a majority of ESSER funds on research-based strategies to increase student achievement. Based on current participation, the department of education projects the program will invest more than \$200 million of ESSER funds in tutoring services.



## Identify the Needs of Local Communities

To prioritize the needs of communities, the department of education reached out to students, families and more than 150 education stakeholder organizations for input on the American Rescue Plan ESSER [state plan](#). Through this process, the department identified

tutoring as a top academic priority. Stakeholders expressed a desire for the state to build the capacity of school districts to provide high-impact tutoring and academic enrichments before, during and after school. The state recognized this concern in designing the TN All Corps program. In addition to the financial support through the grants, the department also provides tutor training and certification, curriculum content for math by grade level, tutoring resources for literacy and recruitment support for tutors.

The department of education also had collaborative listening sessions with local districts to understand the practical limitations that districts faced in offering high-impact tutoring. While not compromising on the tutor-to-student ratio or frequency of tutoring sessions, the department provided some flexibility to districts to help increase participation. Districts were given flexibility in determining when services are provided, whether before, during or after the school day, and staffing options, such as choosing to pay teachers already employed by the district, hiring new staff or contracting with an external partner.



## Form New District Partnerships

TN ALL Corps is available to both school districts and community partners. The state has provided community partners with grants to supplement the tutoring efforts of districts in the region. Some of the [community partners](#) receiving grant support include a literacy organization, a philanthropic foundation and local United Ways. Some districts have also partnered with postsecondary institutions. Nashville Public Schools [is partnering](#) with Vanderbilt University to provide free tutoring to elementary, middle and high school students. The department of education has also published a [community partner guide](#) and [vendor directory](#) to assist districts and community partners in collaborating for the program.



## Monitor Performance to Support Students

All students participating in TN ALL Corps are required to complete a placement assessment and progress monitoring for the duration of the tutoring support. In addition, the department of education will collect information from districts on the process of prioritizing students for tutoring. To aid districts in meeting these requirements, the department provided districts with a [student selection protocol](#) to offer guidance in the selection of students who should be prioritized for tutoring. Student performance is also collected through the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program, which is taken by all students.



## Implement Technology-Based Solutions

The department of education has contracted with [Zearn](#) after completing a competitive procurement process to provide math placement and progress monitoring for TN ALL Corps students at no cost to school districts. Students' progress monitoring occurs on the Zearn platform automatically as students complete digital lessons, and the platform continuously assesses students' knowledge and learning gaps. This platform helps tutors assess each student's continuous improvement to adjust instruction and allows the state and districts to better monitor TN ALL Corps student outcomes.

### More Information

See additional state profiles in the series: [Innovative State Strategies for Using ESSER Funds](#).